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Total Brain Application 'Hemi-Sync' Process Aim

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ADIAL — Your brain hears more than you think it does, but don't worry — you're only using part of it anyway.

If those prospects bother you, a process that was developed across the Blue Ridge Mountains in Nelson County could spell relief.

It's called "Hemi-Sync," and according to advance press information it is being used to focus the attention of first graders in a Tacoma, Wash., elementary school.

Hemi-Sync was developed by Robert Monroe, founder of Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences at Adial, and Devon Edrington of Tacoma Community College.

They, along with the teacher using Hemi-Sync in Tacoma, JoDee Owens, presented a program on Hemi-Sync to a group of school administrators at Monroe Institute yesterday. Another program for teachers is scheduled for Aug. 11.

You may or may not have been aware that there are two hemispheres to your brain — right and left.

Most western people, according to Monroe, use left hemisphere functions more often, and the culture encourages development of these functions over the right.

Because of this, we only use a fraction of the brain's total, possible capacity, Monroe reasons.

He claims that Hemi-Sync is a way to get both hemispheres of the brain working together — synchronized. The term Hemi-Sync is abbreviated from hemispheric synchronization.

How to do it?

The sound we hear occurs within a certain frequency range, just as our radios tune in a certain frequency range. Radio frequencies are in a higher range than that of sound audible to humans.

Below the range audible to humans are other frequencies, and Monroe found that certain of these inaudible frequencies have effects on the brain.

The range from 13 to 26 Hertz triggers alertness and problem solving, while the range from 8 to 13 Hertz makes us alert but relaxed.

If our brains pick up signals from 4 to 8 Hertz, we slip into reverie and are very relaxed.

The range from .5 to 4 Hertz induces non-REM sleep, or unconsciousness.

All well and good, but if the brain can't pick up those frequencies, how can the signals be sent?

Monroe found that by channeling impulses on one frequency into one ear, and impulses on another frequency into the other ear, the brain would distinguish the differential.

Reproduced on a tape, each of the frequency ranges is represented by audible sound in ranges the ears can detect as pulsing sounds, but the frequency differential is supposed to deliver a message to the brain.

Back to the classroom in Tacoma: Edrington theorized that Hemi-Sync could be used to help focus the attention of students in his classes.

"Wandering attention," he says, "is the bane of education."

Those of us whose school day memories include pleasant reveries rudely interupted by indignant teachers asking embarassing questions can empathize with his plight.

Edrington put Hemi-Sync sounds that trigger alertness and relaxation along with neoclassical music on a tape, with the Hemi-Sync sounds being masked by the music.

He found that playing the tapes in class at a quiet level helped students focus attention.

The result: besides becoming known as "the professor who plays the weird music in class," his students started performing better.

Then Edrington theorized that if students could benefit from Hemi-Sync at the college level, they might get an even better education if they were exposed to it at an earlier age.

That's how Ms. Owens got into the act.

She used Hemi-Sync in a first grade class, and her students also learned more quickly.

"Hemi-Sync is a tool to get you to a natural state of optimum learning," she said. "The kids end up doing incredible things."

Gains in learning have been measurable, she claims, but are still in the process of being documented by Tacoma educators. In fact, the Tacoma public school system is holding Hemi-Sync training sessions for other teachers, and is charting the progress of students who have been exposed to the process.

Currently, 10 classrooms are being monitored, and educators are trying to figure out how much of a factor Hemi-Sync is in the education process, she related.

"Hemi-Sync," Ms. Owens said, "helps you get to that intuitive state. Once you get it, it's there for life."

"It's all in here," she said, pointing to her head.

There was skepticism among the school administrators.

"There has been so little research in public schools," said one.

Another pointed out, "There's been so little research on anything else we try. Look at our video programs."

Monroe jumped at the bait.

The skepticism, he said, "shows me how ignorant you are about what we're doing here."

Edrington's research represents only a small part of Hemi-Sync applications.

Monroe said he has developed tapes that help people get to sleep without taking sleep-inducing drugs, help executives catch catnaps on airliners to avoid jet lag, and even tapes that help golfers shave up to five strokes off their scores.

"When you learn the process, you don't need the tape anymore — it becomes encoded," Monroe said.

He said research in the laboratory at Monroe Institute is five years ahead of the classroom application of Hemi-sync.

"Our spectrum of activity is very broad," he commented.

Throughout yesterday's presentation, Hemi-Sync music was played over a sound system

A tape of neo-classical music was blended electronically with Hemi-Sync sounds by a Hemi-Sync generator, which is being retailed by a West Coast firm not associated with the Monroe Institute for $395.

Edrington listed costs for that electronic device, a stereo tape deck, and two speakers at about $620.

The jury is still out on classroom applications of Hemi-Sync, but another seminar for teachers will be held at the institute Aug. 11.

For more information about that seminar, call Jean Wallis at the Monroe Institute at (804) 361-1252.